

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 3rd, 2022

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
United States Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

CC: Julieta Valls Noyes
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Administrator Power,

We are writing to urge you to expand the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) efforts in assisting over 60,000 refugees from the conflict in northern Ethiopia, who have fled into Sudan and are now primarily hosted in either the transit camp at Hamdayet or the more long-term refugee camps in Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah. In particular, we urge USAID to expand the amount of durable shelters known as "tukuls," increase food support, and establish increased access to water, blankets, and sanitation.

We appreciate and commend the lifesaving work USAID is already doing to support Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, as well as the critical work that USAID is doing to support the millions affected by war within Ethiopia, particularly those in Tigray, who have been subjected to starvation as a weapon of war.

As you know, tens of thousands of Ethiopians, who have made the difficult and dangerous journey in order to flee human rights abuses and enforced starvation, now find themselves living in dire conditions within unstable and hastily constructed refugee shelters in camps along Sudan's Ethiopian border. We understand that during your recent visit to the Um Rakuba refugee camp in Sudan, you saw first-hand the difficult conditions these refugees experience, as you noted in your testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee on May 17th of this year.

According to a report by Doctors Without Borders, food scarcity in Sudan's refugee camps is so extreme that camp residents often only eat once a day and have started leading demonstrations. Doctors Without Borders has called the conditions in these camps "appalling" and reported that Ethiopian refugees have "insufficient access to water, food, health care, education, social services, and proper shelter."

Doctors Without Borders also reports that the lack of adequate housing is especially grim at the

transit camp at Hamdayet, which does not have enough tents or shelter. Refugees at the camp are often forced to share communal shelters between multiple families, build makeshift huts from spare materials, or even resort to sleeping in the open. In the refugee camp of Um Rakuba, only 23% of shelters are “tukuls”, which are the only shelters capable of withstanding the high winds and heavy rains of Sudan’s upcoming flood season. During the last flood season, more than 16,000 Ethiopian refugees living in emergency tents and transitional shelters in Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah were impacted after floods and storms “razed tents, swept away [refugees’] belongings, and destroyed infrastructure.” These refugees have already endured unbearable trauma and the lack of adequate housing presents an enormous obstacle to rebuilding their lives.

While the recent humanitarian truce between the Ethiopian Government and Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian Government’s decision to allow increased—although still insufficient—access to humanitarian assistance in Tigray are promising developments, the situation in Ethiopia is still fragile and the potential for new influxes of refugees into Sudan remains. Given that significant numbers of Ethiopian refugees can arrive in Sudan quickly, with previous recorded numbers reaching 3,000 new refugees in the span of a week, establishing adequate, durable shelter for Ethiopian refugees along the Sudanese border is of utmost importance.

Sudan already hosted one of the largest refugee populations in Africa prior to the beginning of the conflict in Tigray and the already-strained political and economic situation in Sudan has deteriorated significantly since last fall’s military coup. As such, there is enormous need for USAID to fill the gap by further prioritizing and supporting these vulnerable populations, who have already endured tremendous suffering prior to fleeing Ethiopia. We respectfully ask that you help this community heal by increasing USAID’s commitment to Ethiopian refugees residing in Sudan by expanding access to “tukuls,” food support, sanitation services, and other humanitarian needs.

We respectfully request a response to the following questions:

1. How much funding is being allocated to Ethiopian refugees in Sudan? Has funding to support refugee populations in Sudan increased sufficiently to account for the roughly 60,000 refugees that have fled into Sudan since the conflict in Tigray began?
2. What, if any, rebuilding efforts have occurred since devastating floods destroyed housing in these refugee camps last year? Have there been efforts to create more durable housing since that point? Will USAID commit to providing more durable housing, also known as “tukuls,” to this refugee population?
3. Of the USAID staff currently in Sudan, what percent are working with the new population of Ethiopian refugees? How many total staff are working with this population?
4. What, if any, are the current USAID efforts to provide reproductive and maternal care to this population given that so many Ethiopian refugees have tragically been subjected to gender-based violence as a weapon of war?

We thank USAID for the vital work it does around the globe and stand ready to work with you to achieve this important humanitarian objective.

Sincerely,



Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker
U.S. Senator



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Tina Smith
U.S. Senator



Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
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Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski
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Dwight Evans
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James P. McGovern
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Ron Kind
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Mike Quigley
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Betty McCollum
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Jackie Speier
Member of Congress